

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4144

INFO AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 26586

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, CD, US, FR

SUBJECT:MILITARY ASSISTANCE REQUEST FROM CHAD

REF: (A) STATE 243319; B) PARIS 25399

1. OUR ANSWERS TO THE DEPARTMENT'S QUESTIONS ARE KEYED  
TO PARAGRAPH TWO OF REF A.

A. TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLDEGE, THERE HAS BEEN NO  
CHANGE IN THE SATUS OF FRENCH MILITARY ADVISORS FROM  
THAT REPORTED IN REF B I.E., THE CHADIANS HAVE NOT  
ASKED FOR THEIR WITHDRAWAL AND THE FRENCH DO NOT NOW  
INTEND UNILATERALLY TO WITHDRAW THEM. SHOULD THE  
CHADIANS ASK FOR THEIR DEPARTURE, THE FRENCH PROBABLY  
WOULD NOT APPPOSE THE REQUEST.

B. UNTIL THE CLAUSTRE AFFAIR HEATED UP, THE QUAI TOOK  
QUIET SATISFACTION FROM THE IMPROVED BILATERAL RELA-  
TIONS BROUGHT ABOUT BY MALLOUM'S REPLACEMTN OF  
TOMBALBAYE. IT VIEWED THE NEW LEADER AS SOMONE WITH  
WHOM IT COULD DEAL PRAGMATICALLY, A BALANCED MAN  
WILLING TO ACCEPT CONTINUED FRENCH PREDOMINANCE IN  
TRADE AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, MINERAL (ESPECIALLY  
URANIUM) PROSPECTING AND EXTRACTION AS THE QUID PRO QUO  
FOR SUBSTANTIAL FRENCH ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTA-  
NCE TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT. WE BELIEVE THE FRENCH  
RETAIN THIS FAVORABLE JUDGEMENT OF MALLOUM AS WELL AS  
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THEIR DESIRE TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN CHAD'S ECONOMY, AND

PARTICULARLY, TO HAVE ACCESS TO CHADIAN RAW MATERIALS. MOREOVER, THEY CONSIDER THEIR POSITION IN CHAD USEFUL FOR STEMMING THE SPREAD OF RADICAL NATIONALISM FROM LIBYA AND ALGERIA TO CENTRAL AFRICA AND FOR LIMITING SOVIET (AND POSSIBLY CHINESE) INFLUENCE IN THE AREA. AS LONG AS IT REMAINS IN DJIBOUTI, FRANCE ALSO HAS AN INTEREST (PROBABLY DIMINISHING) IN CHAD FOR REFUELING PURPOSES. IN LIGHT OF THESE ATTITUDES AND INTERESTS, THE FRENCH CURRENTLY SEEM WILLING TO ACCEPT A GREAT DEAL OF CRITICISM FROM THE MALLOUM GOVERNMENT IN THE EXPECTATION THAT AFTER THE DENOUEMENT OF THE CLAUSTRE AFFAIR, SMOOTH BILATERAL RELATIONS CAN BE REESTABLISHED QUICKLY. SHOULD CHAD GO TOO FAR IN MAKING LIFE DIFFICULT FOR THEM, HOWEVER, THE FRENCH HAVE NO VITAL INTERESTS IN THE COUNTRY THAT THEY WOULD WISH TO DEFEND AT ALL COSTS AND, WITH A VIEW TO PROTECTING THEIR OTHER, MORE IMPORTANT INTERESTS ON THE CONTINENT, MIGHT DECIDE TO REDUCE THEIR PRESENCE SIGNIFICANTLY.

C. THE FRENCH STILL EXPECT TO RIDE OUT THE CLAUSTRE AFFAIR AND WOULD PROBABLY CONSIDER AN EARLY U.S. OFFER TO MEET CHADIAN MILITARY REQUESTS UNHELPFUL TO CURRENT EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS WITH CHAD. IF, AS AT THE MOMENT SEEMS UNLIKELY, THE FRENCH ULTIMATELY DECIDE THAT THEY HAVE NO FUTURE IN CHAD, THEY MIGHT WELCOME SUCH A U.S. OFFER, PREFERRING A FRIENDLY WESTERN INFLUENCE IN CHAD TO OTHER ALTERNATIVES. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ONCE MADAME CLAUSTRE'S FATE IS DECIDED, THE FRENCH IN REASSESSING THEIR POLICY WILL CONCLUDE THAT AMERICAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE WOULD BE A USEFUL COMPLEMENT TO THEIR OWN AID, MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR FRANCE TO LOWER ITS PROFILE WITHOUT ENDANGERING ITS INTERSTS IN CHAD. IN SUCH CASE, TOO, AN AMERICAN OFFER MIGHT BE WELCOMED, PROVIDED FRENCH ASSISTANCE WOULD NOT BE DIVERTED TO PAY FOR U.S. EQUIPMENT.

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